Washington, DC - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today announced the commencement of the first phases of a comprehensive research study to investigate the potential adverse impact that hydraulic fracturing may have on water quality and public health. Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today applauded the start of the EPA's study. Hinchey authored the provision that urged the EPA to conduct the study after questions were raised regarding the safety of the natural gas drilling process.

Along with Congresswoman Diana DeGette (D-CO), Hinchey is also the co-author of the FRAC ACT -- Fracturing Responsibility and Awareness of Chemicals Act, which would close the loophole that exempted hydraulic fracturing from the SDWA and require the oil and gas industry to disclose the chemicals they use in their hydraulic fracturing processes. Currently, the oil and gas industry is the only industry granted an exemption from complying with the SDWA.

"I am very pleased to learn that the Environmental Protection Agency has decided to commence a study that will examine the risks hydraulic fracturing poses to drinking water supplies in New York and across the nation. This is an important step towards ensuring that natural gas drilling is done in a way that protects our environment, vital natural resources and public health. It is also a necessary step since the EPA's 2004 study on the matter was marred by biased data influenced by senior officials in the previous administration.

"Last year, I authored a provision that was approved by Congress, which urged the EPA to conduct this study after serious questions were raised regarding the safety of the natural gas drilling process. While the production of natural gas is necessary and certainly has an important role to play in our national energy policy, it's imperative that we do everything we can to ensure our drinking water supplies are not contaminated. I applaud the EPA's decision to begin a serious investigation into this matter and will continue working to protect our environment from the chemical concoctions being pumped into the ground by energy companies. Understanding the risks that hydraulic fracturing poses to drinking water supplies is critical to guiding future policies and regulations that will safeguard the public."